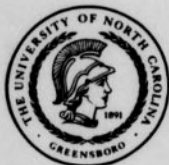


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WILLIAMS, ELIZABETH LYNCH. Poems: The Anatomy of  
Melancholy, or "There Is Much More Need of Hellebor  
Than of Tobacco". . . Robert Burton. (1972)  
Thesis Directed by: Dr. Robert Watson. Pp. 54.

It was the purpose of this work to present a  
body of poetry that shows knowledge of traditional forms,  
while at the same time presenting poetry that is freed  
from the restraints of tradition. The poems try  
to express old thoughts in a new way. There is an  
effort to be objective and universal, yet to contain  
within each poem a modicum of subjectivity.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee  
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of  
North Carolina at Greensboro. for acceptance of this work,

and with special appreciation to Dr. Robert Watson,  
chair and professor, who has guided the preparation  
of this thesis.

Thesis Adviser

Robert Watson

Oral Examination  
Committee Members

Fred Chapell

Arthur W. Dixon

Robert Watson

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THE	and with special appreciation to Dr. Robert Watson,	5
EVE	poet and professor, who has guided the preparation	6
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POET

"Be I a poet or no?" he cries.

Then sings in a sonorous voice:

"Are my songs lies?"

He sings that freedom denies  
freedom. We are trapped with no choice.

"Be I a poet or no?" he cries.

And he sings of love unrequite, and he sighs,  
and his eyes become moist.

"Are my songs lies?"

The freshness of spring he denies,  
as Satan transcendental confusion enjoys.

"Be I a poet or no?" he cries.

He sings of life and defies  
there is joy. Die and rejoice.

"Are my songs lies?"

Poised on the verge of heaven, he dives  
headlong to Hell. Chaos his choice.

"Be I a poet or no?" he cries.

"Are my songs lies?"

## A SIMPLE

Slender tendril the sun and moon apart.

Twisted stalk great rim eclipsed and great.

Groping for the sun moon are one, and dark

Starved for chlorophyll great moss hangs and

Among the other simples sun are one, and

With weed will perfect rim to rim, and

Pushing through the pavement crack sun

To photosynthesize, abyss whose pain

Reach! Weak weed! Thus it is with we, the

Be the one closest to the sun, as

until our playing shadows meet and touch,

and for one great moment hearts combine

we hold this instant of perfection

when you and I project our lone reflection,



## ECLIPSE

No force can keep the sun and moon apart.  
In shadow their great rims eclipse and cross.  
For moments sun and moon are one, and dark  
nets the universe in one great moss  
of night while moon and sun are one,  
elliptically perfect rim to rim.  
The bright of each one's light doth stun  
the other in a deep abyss whose brim  
is perfect oneness. Thus it is with us,  
moving in our own elliptical line  
until our passing shadows meet and touch,  
and for one great moment hearts combine  
to hold this instant of perfection  
when you and I project one lone reflection.

## TO A GLASS CLOWN

Mottled Glass Clown, I fashioned you with care.  
With love I shaped you from a molten blob.  
When I fanned your heated mass with fiery air,  
I birthed your masked face with one great sob.  
I blew your liquid form while smelting hot.  
"Perfection is in thinness," muttered I.  
"But quick! Shape the thing you have begot!"  
"A false-faced clown!" I chilled with choked cry.  
Bursting from the magma, you seemed so agile.  
Your brilliant colors danced into my view.  
But then you cooled, brittle, hard, fragile,  
A mock-faced clown that never would be true.  
Now you lie there, broken, splintered, shattered.  
Gone my Figaro, with all that mattered.

## TO A SUNDEW

Ubiquitous you, you glistening sundew.  
You shine in the sun. I know you attract  
innocent insects while you preen in situ.  
A fruit fly lights on your welcoming bract.  
While you gently massage him with soft hair,  
his struggle is useless. He is in your power,  
trapped by the sheen of your shimmering lair.  
He sought a Garden of Bliss in your bower  
when he paused on your honey-drenched frond.  
You wrapped his winged freedom with tentacles,  
cushioned and smothered him, ate him upon  
a pinked palm of poison covered with manacles.  
But I will not harm you, you insectivore.  
Rule your own kingdom, you Babylon whore.

# THE SIGN SAYS 'WELCOME'

I visited a candy plant today.

Hot sugar oozed from thousand-gallon jars.

Employees were females working for their pay.

Chocolate bars were boxed to railroad cars.

Sweets were cooked and cooled by automation.

No hands touched confectionary delights.

Conveyor belt controlled sweet's creation.

Clocked time, pay check, are female rights.

But no hum of happiness pervades the plant.

No smiles come from female succulence.

The buzz of great machines drones out the chant

of joy. Here a honeyed stream of truculence

is chocolate, sugar, mint, vanilla,

butterscotch, licorice, and sarsaparilla.

How low heavy falls a city.

And you there, fainting Clytemnestra?

Easier with.

Large people.

Flag waving.

Yes, yes.

I am, she is, you are, we are.

None, none, altogether.

Females of the human species.

EVE *(M., Jackie, Mary, Rosa,*

How the mammillary mountains

Bosom forth above the tree line.

Reminiscent. *(The women)*

Ancient eve. *and the world.*

Eve of evil. *(The women)*

Evil eve. *(The women)*

Ate the apple. *(The women)*

Fed the fleshy full-blown fruit to Adam.

Go Godiva! Ride your white horse, mane a-flying.

Stark and naked like our mother.

Mount your housetop, Mad Medea!

Throw your children off the roof!

Helen, Helen, evil woman.

Show how beauty fells a city.

And you there, feinting Clytemnestra!

Fester evil.

Carpet purple.

Play assassin.

Yes, yes.

I am, she is, you are, we are.

Women, women, altogether.

Females of the human species.

Golda, Jackie, Mary, Rose,  
Joan, Indira, Lysistrata.  
Chained and fettered,  
Ever tethered  
To the apple and the seed.  
We must cut the worn umbilical.  
Sheer the cord.  
Uproot the tree.  
Hand out draft cards.  
Take the pill.  
DDT the seething masses.  
End this endless repetition.  
Break the link of Evil Eve.

who layed in my cradle

still birth this way is not too bad

beyond the blue & heaven

where soggy viscous clouds float by

and unto us is given

our purpose here is very clear

so please do not distort

our motto is the same as yours

short short short

ABORT ABORT ABORT

we've hardly room to move about

it is so crowded here

and yet a state of gelatin

provokes a mass of clear

i am my own two eyes you see

and not much more at all

except a bit of squiggly mass

transfigured with my soul

and flushed from out the womby den

a warm and watery state

a pill to sever me from mom

who joyed in my create

still birth this way is not too bad

beyond the bowl a heaven

where soggy tissue clouds float by

and unto us is given

our purpose here is very clear

so please do not distort

our motto is the same as yours

abort abort abort

## JUNGLE

at night

pink-billed egrets

retreat further under

whitely

to roost

among quiet leaves

and whisper secrets

where other feathers rustle

warm and white

she emerges

from under the barn

necessity draws her out

she nats

retreats

regurgitating food

on balls of fur with noses

peering to the daylight

magrals

under joists supporting plenty

mirroring on

uncertain of humanity



## MONGREL MOTHER

crouching

snarling

backing further under

beneath

instinctively suspecting

I must to her with food

and tempt her out

she emerges

from under the barn

necessity draws her out

she eats

retreats

regurgitating food

to balls of fur with noses

peering to the daylight

mongrels

under joists supporting plenty

mirroring me

uncertain of humanity

## LOVE CENTRIFUGAL

to think

to be a part of

near

perhaps to touch

or dream of touch

enough

to contemplate

to start the sphere in motion

held within the whirl by the whirling

searching ahead

for the past

Catch a cloud?

Secure a flame?

Hold down a vapor?

Contain in an analytical thermometer

My love?

## METHOD

There is no orderly arrangement of emotion.

No linear plan of next.

No stair-step ascent.

No organized retreat.

Mapped paths run out at the end of the page.

Jungle covers trails hacked out with machetes.

Graphics of latitude and longitude extend to nowhere.

Measured temperature explodes the mercury.

Wind funnels evaporate.

I plumb the depths.

I test the atmosphere.

I sight in the target.

I core-drill the amorphous mass of emotive matter.

Catch a cloud?

Secure a flame?

Nail down a vapor?

Contain in an analytical thermometer

My love?

## TO YOU, O SLOTH

Long-haired primate, sonambulent traveler,  
 within your furry covering algae grows.  
 Moths hovering lay eggs there, in your hair.  
 Eggs in turn become the larvae, feed on algae,  
 turn to pupae, hatch again, a microcosm,  
 that you are, algae, moth, and hairy sloth,  
 creeping, climbing, arboreal, seeding,  
 breeding, animal, insect, vegetable,  
 in matted hair. You live on love and flowers.

## DELIRIUM

lifted to his bosom  
 I could feel his heart beat  
 I felt safe  
 against his white starched chest  
 he carried me from the dark into the light  
 his black face glistened under a halo of curly hair  
 his teeth were edged with gold

"God will care for you," he sang  
 in whispered rhythm to the measure of his steps

black man

I thought he was God

I was a child

I was delirious

## THE ROSARY

amber beads with facets cut

silver links to finger

pray

each

stone

and

feel

warmth

of ancient rosin fluid once

cross at end of chain

tarnished

body dropt with outstretched palms

impaled with nails

for sale

crown of thorns by thumbs of nuns

patinaed

under vestments

umbilicaled to saviour

hang there jesus

jewelry jesus

bought for pennies

hang

## MEMORY

Remembering

to forget valley shadow of death pain

to remember

I forgot

to forget

to remember

the forgotten

remembering

the forgotten

I forgot

to forget

the terror . . .

Cushing blood

Hands

Great Hands

no gasp?

no cry?

little legs held high

by Hands

hands and legs and little thigh

held high

out of the shadow

with no cry?

no rod no staff no comfort

## STILLBIRTH

Pain *an should die like this, no man who is a man, that*

Down the valley shadow of death pain *drives*

Monster pain *will anesthetized, speech opiated,*

Wrenched pain *he doctor/ ordered, 'more morphine, more,*

Darkness *as tubes, tubes going in, tubes going out,*

Swept up again *thrasher, spades, struggles/ to be*

to Glare *must be restrained, bowed, hands and feet*

Brilliant *to minor-manicured-mechanical-surgery led,*

Nightmare glare *waives sterility, antiseptic white,*

of sheets *with white sheets*

white sheets

of pain *he changed in head bands through wall pictures yesterday,*

Gushing Blood *the left hand tilted twisted to pump of motive balls, and felt the*

Hands *of redoubtful long-horned members of*

Great Hands *many Grade A stock*

no gasp? *he will not let him die like this," they said, in*

no cry? *the sun/ in the grass, in the coat of bay and fawn*

little legs held high *stayed/ stretched by cords. Put him in Room one three*

by Hands *throughout/ many hospital, needles, tubes, narcotics,*

hands and legs and little thigh *with no touch on*

held high *with no touch on*

out of the shadow

with no cry?

no rod no staff no comfort



## NO BOOTS ON

No man should die like this, no man who is a man, that  
is,/ suntanned and sinewed body drugged, desire  
narcotized,/ will anesthetized, speech opiated.

'Morphine," the doctor/ ordered, 'more morphine, more,  
more," and tubes, tubes going in,/ tubes going out.  
Yet the patient thrashes, tosses, struggles/ to be  
free. He must be restrained, bound, hands and feet  
tethered/ to motor-controlled-mechanical-safety bed,  
clamped/ in four-walled sterility, antiseptic white,  
clean./

He slogged in mud boots through wet pastures yesterday.  
He/ prodded rumps of massive bulls, and felt the  
weighty haunches,/ selected long-horned breeders of  
meaty Grade A stock./

'We will not let him die like this," they said, in  
the sun,/ in the grass, in the smell of hay and fecund  
stable,/ stabbed by horns. Put him in Room one three  
three zero,/ Mercy Hospital, needles, tubes, narcotics,  
with no boots on.

## CYCLOSIS

Bloated yellow-bellied bullfrog

with stupid, staring, goggly eyes,

floats motionless, until

he claps his wide mouth shut on

a flutter of blue butterflies clustering.

Turtle blends with algaed rock,

rock and turtle damped to olive color, until

he flicks a wiggling tadpole

from the jelly mass wriggling.

Coiled brown snake

mouths silently, elastically,

unbroken egg of turtle, until

circling hawk swoops,

snares the careless snake writhing.

I rise,

surface,

shiver my gills,

scatter prisms in the sun,

and snatch

a narrow creamy mayfly

ogling.

Great blue heron

poised, until

he tilts

with hypodermic speed

his bill

in my direction . . .

the one in three

with cork and feathers

barbed to kill

he hooks the one

man

the fisherman

plays life downstream

hastens over rocks

elick with fungus

line taut and rod bent

the gill-less one

flounders with flooded lungs

in murky depths of glacier melt

salmon man rod

entangle in seaward struggle

below the surface coils

## EXISTENTIAL

he saw the three  
sculling in the currents  
gilling upstream

he tossed the lure  
to attract the one  
the one in three

with cork and feathers  
barbed to kill  
he hooks the one

man  
the fisherman  
plays life downstream

hastens over rocks  
slick with fungus  
line taut and rod bent

the gill-less one  
flounders with flooded lungs  
in murky depths of glacier milk

salmon man rod  
entangle in seaward struggle  
below the surface calm

relentlessly the Skeena flows  
reflecting aspens

because

because

I took a life

one small squeeze

behind the eyes

crilled the wings

halted the fluttering

stopped the beat

it flitted past

and then flew back

and lighted on my palm

breathing

fanning its wings

communicating to the sun

and I

big-thumbbed and sure

pinched the bit of blue

antennae

microscopically perfect

I took its life

fecklessly

one minute after take-off

BECAUSE . . .

because

because

because

I took a life

one small squeeze

behind the eyes

stilled the wings

halted the fluttering

stopped the beat

it flitted past

and then flew back

and lighted on my palm

breathing

flexing its wings

communicating in the sun

and I

big-thumbed and sure

pinched the bit of blue

antennaed

microscopically perfect

I took its life

fecklessly

one minute after take-off

it flexed its motors  
 fluttered once  
 on radar  
 the winged invention  
 panel of instruments  
 infallible  
 went off the screen  
 in thumb of ice  
 heartbeat of the motor  
 my son  
 because  
 because  
 because of the butterfly . . .

that crush that crack  
 They roll down boulders  
 that crunch and crack the stone  
 the rock . . .  
 some back  
 the crack  
 the edge of earth  
 grades  
 a hollow shelf  
 gives way within

## NIGHTMARE

along a deepening stream

a maze

labyrinth regurgiting

visceral urgings

pools reflecting

intimacies eye to eye

pulling the filings of my pride

I run

I crouch

I hide my face

They throw great rocks

that crush that crack

They roll down boulders

that crunch and smack

the muck . . .

move back

the crack

the edge of earth

erodes

a hollow shelf

gives way within



gram by grain crumbles inward

to puff of dust

the rim sloughs off

within abyss

powdered

the brink folds

against the brim

out

rub it all out

erase

scrub

scratch it away until the nails and skin are gone

bleed down to the bone

tear

until the tearing is the thing

his name was not peter

he was a black man

he was put in a box

he was put in a wagon

he was pulled through the streets

behind two wheels

is ya' hang clean yit

or is you still washin' dem hands

JOHN 11:22:63

two shots

a Jesus-man is gone

to join the father?

they were all there

the crowd

pontius

who gave the order

"Crucify him!"

you?

are you the one?

the hand-washing one?

KINGS 4:4:68

he was not hung by his feet

his name was not peter

he was a black man

he was put in a box

he was put in a wagon

he was pulled through the streets

behind two mules

is yo' hans clean yit

or is you still washin' dem hans?

## LADYBUG

your house is on fire

you checked in here

so now check out

just leave

quietly

like a little breeze

or a small cloud

that covers the sun for an instant

you will not be noticed ladybug

retreat into your inverted cone

you dug it

grain

by a hand, spine-relieved,

grain to earth, flattened

in its inaction,

dry

soil

# HAIKU

Scrotally hanging,  
moccasin flower waits. Bee,  
leg-laden, hovers.

Sparrow, straw in beak,  
darts from garbage truck heaped high.  
Trash-crusher grinds on.

Fern frond, spore-relieved,  
snuggles to earth. Fiddlehead  
coils in erection.

## DESK RUBBINGS

the fritillary

i do not want to be a process

unpatterned

free

is the way i want to be

not melded in a fresco

nor welded on a stein

lady clairol in a bottle

nefertiti in a shrine

unchrysalid

me

winging free

flitting in daisies

shredding my paisleys

nest

corners

are warmer

where habits

co-rabbit

lonesome?

go stand in line  
 elbow to shoulder  
 bolder?  
 don't knock it  
 pickpocket

pete's gate

U there U  
 $U_2$  in cloud shroud  
 mastercharg'd?  
 IBM'd  
 cell yourself  
 cubed  
 rhombed  
 tetrahedroned  
 within the equilateral  
 lost  
 beneath the cross

flea verse

gorged  
 with herman  
 nathaniel  
     george  
 great Greek  
 cathartic thing

burst

erupt

explode

consume

desire

and end

repressed

denied

concealed

congealed

U<sub>2</sub>

frustrate

maya

you fool

typho

hundred heads

broiling

under Etna

descending

even the banks flutter to the floor

shuddering

TO MAUD GONNE AND WILLIE YEATS

the bird

the bird

the feathered thing

sings

within the shell

of glory descended

yolked

in yellow hair

dropping feathers

playing the Ledaean game

og od

you lousy bastard

you feathered glory

swanning

whirling

gyring by

descending

even the books flutter to the floor

shuddering



after

how can one put on all that knowledge?

so you are

among the bottles now

on my dressing table

and I can wind you up

turn you on

make you gyre

spire

perne

and spin your feathers

as it pleasures me

turn the key and you will say

"take sex out of your life and you have something else  
again!"

TO TATIE

black-christ

lion-man

earthbound

pis and pus

and pisces

marlin-man

tolling bells

for bulls

had to know

how it is

to die

searched

for the formula

the instant-kill

yet not destroy

hyena-man

entrails trailing

had to know

and pulled the trigger

TO CARL SANDBURG

old man?

old man?

old long-haired

white-haired

man of goats

man of people

man of poets

vibrant man

who strum'd

guitar

sang as he saw things as are

sang discords in cacaphone

sang as tho' his lone heart moan'd

for the plight

of man

man of Lincoln

slavery

great old man of poetry

where are you?

have you found a Kalamazoo?

"Sometimes with luck I find an entire bottle  
A nip of certain hydrazine, wine, or coke."

## GRASMERE OR RESOLUTION UPDATED

As a reed, bent and blacked by winter frosts,  
blends into the landscape, so he leans  
in the wind, head meeting feet almost,  
as he stoops, moving among the greens,  
turning the turf with his feet as if he means  
to find something of value in the grass  
on the road-edge. Most travelers pass  
on by a sack slung on a back. He grasps  
it wrinkled with his gnarled left. With his  
right, a hook, he lifts something with his clasps.  
He puts it in his sack. I draw near. He lists.  
and looks at me with eyes of hurt, resists  
my poaching on his private loneliness. He peers  
from shaggy brows, rags, faulty limbs, and beard.

This man seems not all alive nor dead  
here among the weeds in a roadside ditch.  
He pauses. "What seek ye, man?" I ask,  
feeling as one trespassing in another's niche.  
Leaning to let fall the sack, with a twist  
of hook, he shows me: butts of chewed cigars,  
cigarettes, bottles, thrown from passing cars.

"Sometimes with luck I find an extra smoke  
A nip of terpin hydrate, wine, or coke."

He turns and wanders on, encounter ended.  
And soon he with the other matter blended.

and sat down in the sand.

The one I loved was with me there,

and hand in hand,

we let the waves lap over us,

and rolled among the shells.

We spread a feast there on the sand,

Chablis, and cheese, and bread,

and then we scattered crumbs

while gulls swooped overhead.

They squawked the morning food of food,

and ours birds came,

Nothing here to fear.

One wounded gull limped

from sea grass on the dune.

With dragging wing

it came in close.

and out of my hand,

My love was close.

He snatched the gull.

He held it in his hand.

With one swift move he snapped its head

across my crutch's end.

## HATTERAS

I tossed my crutches on the beach  
and sat down in the sand.  
The one I loved was with me there,  
and hand in hand,  
we let the waves lap over us,  
and rolled among the shells.  
We spread a feast there on the sand,  
Chablis, and cheese, and bread,  
and then we scattered crumbs  
while gulls swooped overhead.  
They squawked the message loud of food,  
and more birds came.

Nothing here to fear.

One wounded gull limped  
from sea grass on the dune.  
With dragging wing  
it came up close,  
and ate out of my hand.

My love was close.

He snatched the gull.  
He held it in his hand.  
With one swift move he snapped its head  
across my crutch's end.

He tossed it dead into the grass.  
Was blood there on his hand?

"Let's swim," he said,  
and ran ahead  
while I squirmed out to sea.  
The birds had flown,  
not one in sight.  
Where could the white gulls be?

A great wave smashed into my face  
and pulled me in the slough.  
I rolled along the bottom  
with broken shells and jetsam.  
A blue fish washed against my arm.  
A stingray brushed my leg.  
The current held me in its wash  
with sand dollars and conchs.  
I had no air  
beneath the sea.  
Surely my chest will burst.  
My legs were useless up above  
my face pulled in the sand.

As suddenly as I went down,  
so I was washed aloft.  
With pounding ears and breathing quick

I reached for land.

My arms would motivate no more.

Waves washed me ashore.

I lay in flotsam, weeds, and shells,  
and shook in violent ague.

The beach patrol came by  
and found me on the strand.

My crutches were beside the gull  
half-covered in the sand.



## ATONAL

To scream?

Among lilies,

and velvet cushions,

and carved pews,

to scream?

Look at that one in the window, haloed,

garments blue, tranquil hands.

The glass is cracked across her face.

The choir is coming down the aisle, a smother

of white cloth whorling.

He is coming, horn-rimmed and robed,

crashing in recessional, a crescendo,

of allelulias

screaming.

"Sing," he shouted that day from the organ bench,

"Sing, Deborah, sing! Hit the high note, sound it,  
clear!"

"I cannot sing," I screamed, "I cannot sing anymore."

"You will sing, you will sing for me," he screamed,

"sing like no one has sung in this church before!"

"I cannot sing," I whispered, faint.

He tore the hymnal from my hands and threw it at the  
wall. It sailed across the choir stall and slapped

against the organ pipes. The pages fluttered.

It crumpled on the floor.

I ran across the sanctuary,

stumbled over Easter lilies.

I fell against the altar rail.

The Virgin stared from her window, pale, pure, placid,

seeing nothing, looking nowhere, while white garments

smothered me under great horn-rimmed glasses.

Against the velvet prayer cushions, I felt naked.

## CASBAH, OR AN INITIATION STORY

you shoulda seen her, Ma  
you never would believe  
with nuthin' but her pasties on  
atwirlin'  
one went this way  
one went that  
and then she leaned so far so back  
her twirlies goin' round  
above those mounds  
like 'copter bottoms  
her belly muscles twitchin'  
I shoulda left, Ma  
the sight was more'n a boy could stand  
and then she turned her thighs on me  
them twirlin' things behind  
asighted at me, Ma  
around and around  
above them ripplin' muscles  
quivering  
like a chopper in the wind  
sequins seekin'  
and me astandin' there in Tetuan  
areachin' and aretchin'

I WILL BE FREE!

No . . . I'll not vote!

I sure ain't agonter.

You kin sit thar all day and ask me.

No good to come up hyer to carry me to them polls.

I hain't agonter vote, I tell ye.

I hain't agonter to do hit.

Lord God.

I'm a widder woman.

A pore widder woman.

Ain't got nuthin'.

But a hawg.

And a few chickens.

And they won't gi' me nuthin' up at that courthouse.

Orter help a widder woman.

Jus' you look at me.

Asnowed in hyer.

Nobody to chop airy piece a' kindlin'.

And you asks me to go vote?

No . . . I'll not vote.

Goddam ye.

Owed 'em some taxes them courthouse fellers say'd.

Let 'em come out hyer.

See how a widder woman has to work.

Why, hit's almos' time to put in terbaccy.

You think they'r agonter holp me?

No . . . I'll not vote!

They come hyerabouts with them papers . . .

That's what I'll do . . .

My ole man's gun

And hit's a good 'un

Astandin' thar in the corner

Right wher it stood the night he died.

Laid him out good, I did.

In his Sunday suit.

It uz a fine funeral.

An' they outer holp a widder woman.

Them courthouse fellers.

No . . . I'll not vote!

And you git offen my front porch.

Shoo!

Goddam you . . .

## OUT OF THE BROWN

the brown

the juice

from lips

parched

cancerous

mouthin' brown leaves

devil's weed

that chokes and rots

"Howdy, Miss Sal," I said, "you fitten?"

"I'm fair t'middlin'," she replied, and spat

her wad into the yard, and wiped the brown

juice from the corners of her lips. "She ain't

doin' no good," Mitch then adjured, "she coughs

all night sometimes, and fallin' off she is,

more ever day. Look't 'er! Thin'sa splinter!"

"Aw, hit hain't so," said Sal, mouse-shy as if

she had been caught, and turned her face away

behind her bonnet so I could not see

the scabby cancer on her nose, a sore

that looked like fungus on a rotting log.

"Mitchell, git me a box of snuff," Sal said,

pulling pennies from her apron pocket

browned from hands that wiped the juice of snuff,

"and a new terbaccer cloth we'll need

come spring. Last year's is plum wore out."

Said Mitch,

"We totty up today," and pulled a roll  
of bills out of his overalls, and paid  
me for supplies. We tally up and start  
fresh when Mitch sells the tobacco crop: salt,  
sugar, snuff, ground tobacco, nails, and such.  
Mitch rolled a cigarette and licked the edge.  
He put the limp thing between his lips. "Match?"  
I struck a light, then backed the truck and turned  
across the creek out of the darkening cove.

Dew was falling in the evening dusk  
when I came back and it was planting time.  
I brought Miss Sal a new tobacco cloth,  
but she had changed her mind. "We'll save it back,  
the new 'un," and she put it in a drawer.  
"I've mended up th'old and it'll do fer now.  
Come holp me seed the bed," she said, and turned  
her scabby face and tied her bonnet strings.  
A thimble-full of burley seed she mixed  
with wood ashes in a can and sprinkled  
ashes, seeded, on the ground. We tamped  
the seeds and stretched the old cloth, mended now,  
and tacked it to the frame of boards. The chores  
were done this day.

We went our way in brown

of dusk to the log house, smoke-browned with time,  
our guide, the tip of Mitchell's cigarette.

A whippoorwill whistled to its mate.

Miss Sal's cough made clear that she was near.

Inside she crept to a split chestnut chair,  
and leaned against the chimney warmth. "Fetch me  
my pipe," she said, "I shore am tuckered out."

Mitch stuffed the pipe he'd made from cob and reed  
and handed it to Sal. To light the pipe  
he touched a rich-pine splinter to the fire.

One winter night at handin' time, I came  
to see if Mitch and Sal had needs. Mitch  
was in the rafters lifting down the sheaves.  
Sal was on the ground stripping off the leaves.  
The barn was dark, and damp, and cold. "Look hyer,"  
said Sal, 'hit's come in case, soft like leather,"  
then pulled her apron to her face, but  
I could see the blood. 'Handin' terbaccer  
makes it bleed. The doctor said 'no more,'  
but Mitch and me's a crop to git.

Come down,

Mitch!" she called, "hit's dark and time to quit."  
Mitch climbed down and picked her up. He lifted  
chair and all. Sal seemed but a spectre  
inside some woolen rags. "You bring the lamp,"



she said to me from out of Mitch's arms.  
We left the acrid barn with odor scorched,  
brown, thick. It filled my nostrils, throat, and eyes.

Snow lay white when I went back.  
Tobacco hands were stacked,  
Brown leaves in a brown barn.  
White snow sifted down. Mitch  
was working on the porch.  
With a double-edged axe  
he hewed a brown pine log.  
I watched him smooth the sides.  
Then he turned. His eyes were red.  
He cleared his throat as if . . .  
but he didn't need to tell.  
A pine box he had hewed,  
and lined with new white gauze.  
The tobacco cloth was a winding sheet.  
Miss Sal had died. Time paused.  
I bowed my head. Quietly  
a snowflake curtain fell.

## ESCAPE

poetic thoughts

not writ in ink

cast in vapor

sculpt in think

snowflakes trapped

within the palm

crystal frozen

without harm

molded moments

intagliod

carved in time

caught cameo

atoms ringed

neutronized

plus with minus

magnetized

teardrops jelled

in bas-relief

adamantined

in sudden grief

soul's deep desires

catacombed

stoned in sphinx

earth entombed

escape

## THE HURT OF PHIDIAS

is pensive Athena

shield cracked

peplos notched

bosom gone

is the Moschophore

with sacrificial calf

no hands    no nose    no chin

is Erectheum

dismembered ladies of the sculptor

mutilated arms    curls    breasts

is the Sphinx of Napos

ridiculous without her nose

is Charioteer waiting at Delphi

holding empty reins

is snub-nosed Sileni

the saddest one

bearded    old    kneeling

holding the weight of the stage on one shoulder

guarding the theatre

while Dionysius roams

Sileni

pinus broken

looks Phidian eyes at you

convicts you

Parthenonic rubble

endless pile of legs arms heads

in grief of separation

do I see the hurt of Phidias here

in Picassoan restoration?