

POETS' CORNER

Here is Daddy's wonderful poem.

yours,

Abigail
Thomas

BICENTENNIAL NIGHT-SONG

Held in the dampening palm of my mind
Is a moon half the size of a quarter,
Done for a dollar, polished for barter,
Whiter than bone, made for a mortar.
Take up the pestle and grind
Half-a-time half-a-time half-a-time undertime
Oh I have earned it.
Yes, says my lodger my guest
You have earned it.

Held in the palm of my marvelling mind
Is a century blown to the ground,
Colder than Christmas, greyer than wind,
Blind as an alley, dead as an end.
Pound it to powder and grind
Half-a-time half-a-time half-a-time undertime
Oh I have earned it.
Yes, says my lodger the judge
You have earned it.

Held in the palm of my motionless mind
Is a universe run by the book,
Run by the stars, run by the clock,
Run out of time, run out of luck.
Into the mortar and grind
Half-a-time half-a-time half-a-time undertime
Oh I have earned it.
Yes, says my lodger my friend.
You have earned it.

Held in the palm of my pocketless mind
Is a nestling the age of the earth,
Marvelled and wondered, measured for worth,
Green as an aspen, smelling of birth.
Weigh it precisely and grind
Half-a-time half-a-time half-a-time undertime
Oh I have earned it.
Yes, says my lodger my love
You have earned it.

- Lewis Thomas

POETS' CORNER

THE ACCIDENT ROOM

A constant, brilliant yellow-white radiance lights evenly
the tides of activity,
Emphasizes the ever-present black and white contrast:
The white uniforms of hurrying nursing angels,
The black uniforms of gruff watching policemen,
Tired sweat-drenched doctors,
Large palpitating breasts, the background for stab wounds.

They flock here day and night,
Any problem we are asked, and try to solve for them:
Full of pain and misery—lost, drunk, stabbed or broke.
“She fell out—”, “misery right under my breast—”,
“Hurting in my stomach for two weeks—”, “ain’t seen
Nothing in four months—”, been hiccupping for 3 days”, “is it
Broken?”, “stabbed me in the back—never
Saw him before.”

Medical and social problems, emergency patchwork is done.

They trust us so.

Their smallest problems are so big to them.

We disappoint them with our brisk belittling hurry.
When looking back our smallest reassurance helped.
Sickness and discomfort have made confiding children
Of the toughest nuts to crack.

F. T. Billings

REFLECTIONS ON THE INVESTIGATION

I would like to be a physician
For a New York politician,
To keep him (and his family) in poor health.
Whenever a suspicion
Placed him in a position
Where he was asked to total up his wealth.

Lewis Thomas

Ed. Lew wrote this for the Princeton Tiger of which he was an editor back in 1932.
New York investigations have always been topical and fair game for the press.

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BRIDGE

I saw St. Francis today
At the corner of Lexington and twenty-third -
Two clubs to start the bidding darlings -
Nutty as a fruit-cake and happy as a clam
To mix my metaphors of food
He didn't see me - He was all alone
Begging some oranges from a poor fruit vendor
He has an old house nearby
Where he takes derelict drug addicts
And tries to feed the wretches
And build them up
A pretty messy rundown place
Some woman helps him
The health department turns its blind eye
Spent his whole inheritance running it
When the money ran out
He began begging shamelessly from one and all
Friend stranger rich poor good bad
Even hard-hearted me
Three clubs O dear sorry
I mean three hearts
You remember him Alice
He went to Harvard with my brother
His family always did think he had a screw loose
There he was with all that education,
Wheedling a poor vendor for some fruit
There was something very warm and earnest about him
A guileless confidence that God the Father
Was right there on the corner
Sharing with him the secret joke
How between them he would provide the oranges
Needed for his addicts.
I could almost touch the Umbrian dust
On his unpolished shoes
And see the brown habit
Beneath his unpressed coat
My dear it touched me so
I later slipped the vendor a fiver
With instructions to make it easier next time
Your bid darling
(Or is it mine?)

George W. Constable

Ed. "Bridge" is a fragment from a long poem by classmate George entitled "Six Stone Water Jars (a counterpoint to The Waste Land)" His poem is in contrast with the deep pessimism expressed in T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" over the poet's disillusionment with the first world war and despair at the materialism of the early 20th century. "Six Stone Water Jars" is a poetic statement of deep faith in the Christian ethic and in its power, through the capacity of the human spirit for love and generosity, to overcome the destructive forces of selfishness in the world. The poet concludes:

O blessed waste
That calls the gardener in
O blessed gardener
Who finds a way
To open up a spring in Rock
And make the wasteland flower.

POETS' CORNER

ANCESTORS

You made us what we are today;
 We hope you're satisfied
We didn't ask to join this hay-
 This planetary-ride.

Ten thousand strong, you set the trap
 A thousand years ago.
A twenty generation gap
 Proliferates our woe.

We're not the master of our fate,
 Though so declare the poems,
Your genes, oh spirits, generate
 Our cells and chromosomes.

So Ashley, Dusty, Courtney, Jim,
 Remember when you're bad,
The guilty party's really him
 Your great, great, great grand-dad.

And don't forget when you are good
 To whom the credit goes:
A hairy, taily guy who stood
 On all his twenty toes.

(Or if you fancy Genesis,
 You'll credit Eve, of course.
Her apple-eden nemesis
 Begot your apple-source.)

Oh ghosts of those who've gone before,
 Of Ludlum, Wutkiewicz,
Of Marsh and Mulford, Bell and Orr,
 Of Spicer, Sun and Hiss:

It's nice to have you in the wings
 To blame for every sin.
Your aged, saged presence brings
 Collective wisdom in.

Our geneologist, they say,
 Has made a strong exertion
To know you better, but no way
 He'll visit you in person.

Oh Cynosures, your sinecure
 We dig, and honor you
Because, you see, We're pretty sure
 Some day we'll be one too.

Theron L. Marsh

SONG

Now I lay me down on a high-flung hill
Over a purple sea,
Where the sun is warm and the winds are still,
Murmuring drowsily.
Oh, I'd find me peace in the great white noon
Under the cedar tree,
And I'd find me peace when the sad pale moon
Silvered the soul of me.
Through the golden day I would lie at length,
Smelling the warm live grass;
And my heart would beat with a calm deep strength,
Watching the slow clouds pass.
And my thoughts would wonder through sea and sky,
Floating in worlds of blue,
Like a full-blown sail of a sea-gull's cry—
With never a thought of you.

Philip C. Horton